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Historical vignette

A Cyprian Ode

Says Venus to Cupid, "It grieves me to think
What ills my dear votaries befall,
Who, whilst my sweet nectar they eagerly drink,
Too oft find it mingled with gall.

What left-handed Demon thus dashes the bowl,
As grudging poor mortals the bliss;
Who sheds the contagion that darts through the
soul,
And kills with a treacherous kiss?

Bid Mercury straight go and bind the fell fiend
In chains adamantine, I pray
That lovers may hence give their fears to the
wind,
And joyful proclaim holiday.

From hence let them banish dull sorrow and care,
Needless torture no longer endure;
Lo! I send down Apollo to impersonate
C - - e,*
Who shall teach them a lenient cure."

*Peter Clare was a London surgeon. He quoted lines about himself in a book on venereal disease which he edited, published in 1783. "Cyprian" formerly meant "lewd".

J D ORIEL